

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A call handling method comprising:
receiving an indication of an incoming call to a destination number ("DN"); and
initiating an outgoing call to a plurality of forwarding numbers while leaving said incoming call unanswered.
2. The method of claim 1 further comprising, in response to one said outgoing telephone call being answered, bridging said incoming call with said answered outgoing call.
3. The method of claim 2 further comprising, prior to said bridging, qualifying a party answering said outgoing telephone call as a party entitled to receive said incoming call.
4. The method of claim 1 further comprising, where said DN is associated with a subscriber line, initiating an outgoing call to said subscriber line.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein said initiating comprises accessing a database for a record corresponding with said DN and locating each forwarding number in said record.
6. The method of claim 5 further comprising, where none of said outgoing calls is answered within a predetermined time, accessing said record for an action to take in respect of said incoming call.
7. The method of claim 6 wherein said action is forwarding to voice mail and, in response, forwarding said incoming call to voice mail.
8. The method of claim 3 wherein said qualifying comprises requesting an input from said party.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein said initiating comprises accessing a database for a record corresponding with said DN and locating each forwarding number in said record, and wherein said input is compared with an entry in said record.

10. The method of claim 3 further comprising, where said party answering fails to qualify, bridging said incoming call with a voice mail box associated with said DN.

11. The method of claim 1 further comprising, where none of said outgoing calls is answered within a predetermined time, bridging said incoming call with a voice mail box associated with said DN.

12. A method of redirecting an incoming telephone call from a calling party to a subscriber comprising:

sensing said incoming telephone call;

retrieving forwarding location information from a database;

locating said subscriber based on said forwarding location information by initiating outgoing telephone calls to a plurality of forwarding locations; and

answering and connecting said incoming telephone call to said subscriber, if said subscriber is located.

13. A computer readable medium containing computer-executable instructions which, when performed by a processor in a telephone system, cause said processor to:

receive an indication of an incoming call to a destination number ("DN"); and

initiate an outgoing call to a plurality of forwarding numbers while leaving said incoming call unanswered.

14. The medium of claim 13 containing computer-executable instructions which, when performed by a processor in a telephone system, cause said processor to in response to one said outgoing telephone call being answered, bridge said incoming call with said answered outgoing call.

15. The medium of claim 14 containing computer-executable instructions which, when performed by a processor in a telephone system, cause said processor to: prior to causing said bridge, qualify a party answering said outgoing telephone call as a party entitled to receive said incoming call.

16. The medium of claim 13 containing computer-executable instructions which, when performed by a processor in a telephone system, cause said processor to, where said DN is associated with a subscriber line, initiate an outgoing call to said subscriber line.

17. The medium of claim 13 containing computer-executable instructions which, when performed by a processor in a telephone system, cause said processor to initiate by accessing a database for a record corresponding with said DN and locating each forwarding number in said record.

18. The medium of claim 17 containing computer-executable instructions which, when performed by a processor in a telephone system, cause said processor to, where none of said outgoing calls is answered within a predetermined time, access said record for an action to take in respect of said incoming call.

19. The medium of claim 18 wherein said action is forwarding to voice mail and, in response, forwarding said incoming call to voice mail.

20. The medium of claim 15 wherein said party is qualified by requesting an input from said party.

21. The medium of claim 20 wherein said outgoing calls are initiated by accessing a database for a record corresponding with said DN and locating each forwarding number in said record and wherein said input is compared with an entry in said record.

22. The medium of claim 15 containing computer-executable instructions which, when performed by a processor in a telephone system, cause said processor to, where said party answering fails to qualify, bridge said incoming call with a voice mail box associated with said DN.

23. The medium of claim 13 containing computer-executable instructions which, when performed by a processor in a telephone system, cause said processor to, where none of said outgoing calls is answered within a predetermined time, bridge said incoming call with a voice mail box associated with said DN.